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## BOUNDARY INVENTORY FILE

### China-India Boundary

A long-standing boundary dispute exists between China and India. The border between them stretches from Burma, in the east, to Kashmir\*, in the west, but is interrupted in the middle by the small countries of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. The boundary has evolved mainly through traditional usage and is poorly defined; no part of it has been demarcated. Most of the border area has never been accurately surveyed or mapped and minor inconsistencies have developed even in stretches where there is a fair amount of agreement on boundary alignment. The two countries have long held conflicting claims to several areas, but until the past few years these claims have caused little friction because, for the most part, the areas claimed are extremely rugged and are sparsely settled. Until recently the Chinese government had not been able to extend its authority into Tibet and hence China was not in control of territory contiguous to the Indian frontier. Since 1954, however, a series of local border disturbances that culminated in armed clashes and some loss of life in 1959 erupted along the frontier and brought the border dispute into sharp focus. More agreement on the general alignment of the boundary has been achieved in the west, where only a few local areas are in dispute, than in the east.

#### Burma-Bhutan Sector

The largest area in dispute is near the eastern end of the boundary, where the Chinese claim an area approximately the same as that of India's Northeast Frontier Agency. Both countries cite various old maps to support their respective claims. The only serious attempt to delimit the boundary in this area was made at the Simla Conference in 1914, when the McMahon Line -- delimiting most of the boundary along the Himalayan water divide -- was established. The Chinese representative at the conference initialed a draft of the agreement but did not sign the agreement itself, which was later repudiated by China. Since 1914 the British government has recognized the McMahon Line as the legal boundary, and later the Indian government also recognized the McMahon Line although it has never been demarcated on the ground. Neither the Chinese Communist government nor the government of the Republic of China recognizes the McMahon Line; and on their maps they show as Chinese territory all of the land between the Himalayan water divide and the Brahmaputra Plain of India.

\* Parts of Kashmir (also referred to as Jammu and Kashmir) are being claimed by both India and Pakistan. For purposes of the Boundary Inventory File, Kashmir is treated as a separate state and will be discussed in another report.

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The disputed area is not very valuable from an economic point of view but is desirable for strategic reasons and for reasons of national prestige. Strategically, India would find her position almost indefensible against a ground attack from the north if her frontier were established at the foot of the Himalayan Range. The area involved in the dispute, however, is physically inhospitable and presents tremendous obstacles to travel from both Tibet and India as well as within the area itself. There are only a few tracks and trails and very few roads. Travel to and from Tibet is limited to high mountain passes, all of which are above the snow line. Most of the inhabitants of the area are aborigines living in remote parts of this inaccessible region. Except for occasional groups of people of Tibetan origin in the north and scattered throughout the remainder of the area, the population of the border country is not ethnically akin to either the Tibetans or the Indians. The inhabitants would be affected very little by boundary changes one way or the other.

#### Nepal-Kashmir Sector

West of Nepal the boundary has evolved through long usage and custom. Although its exact location is still indefinite, the delineation of the boundary as running along the drainage divide, except in a few short stretches, has been essentially accepted by both countries. The Chinese maintain that the precise delineation of the border should be negotiated because the boundary has never been demarcated and because disputes have arisen in the past. Historically, clashes between the local inhabitants of the border area have been more frequent here than along the eastern sector of the boundary, but the territory under dispute is much smaller and is not continuous. Disputes have arisen over the right to tax cross-border travelers and over grazing rights in the border area. In 1954, an attempt was made to minimize some of these difficulties through the Sino-Indian Trade Agreement whereby six passes were specified as the only ones to be used by Indian traders and pilgrims. Since then there has been little disagreement about the location of the boundary in the vicinity of these passes, but the alignment through the remainder of the area is subject to differing interpretations.

Chinese and Indian maps disagree principally in regard to the central portion of the boundary near Nilang and Bara Hoti, although Chinese incursions into territory claimed by India have been reported in a number of other places. The areas involved are generally south of the water divide and include small villages and pastures that are mainly uninhabited except during the summer. Claims by both sides are supported by considerable cartographic evidence -- including maps produced by foreign countries, among them the United States -- but most of it is vague, conflicting, and generally unreliable.

# CHINA-INDIA BOUNDARY

